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EDUCATION IN ST. VINCENT: BIABOU
Carey D. Toran

Introduction

The brief case study which precedes the body of the paper presents a composite of several days' observation at the Biabou Methodist Elementary School. I also spent one day at the elementary school in Greggs, and although I realize that the two schools possess distinct personalities and problems, I also include in the case study some impressions received at Greggs as I feel they are representative of the educational system in St. Vincent.

In preface to the case study, I will describe the school itself and briefly introduce some educational policies of St. Vincent.

The Biabou Methodist Elementary School is composed of two long, rectangular wood and cement structures, with the smaller and newer one built on a slightly higher level. One thousand and fourteen pupils, ages five through fifteen enrolled from Biabou and the surrounding districts during the 1970-71 three-term year to receive the government-provided (but not compulsory) education. Five separate small rooms (one fallen into disrepair and disuse) and one large room divide the longer and older building into approximate halves. The Infants and Junior I, II, and III classes use the large room which is divided into sections by movable blackboards. The Junior IV and V classes are held in the separate rooms. Severely scarred and marked old-fashioned benches and tables, many falling apart, cover the floor, with spaces hardly large enough for small children to pass separating the rows. A small room at the end of the building constitutes the Head Teacher's "office" and the storage room for classroom materials. The Senior I, II, and III sections occupy the smaller, newer building which has no separate rooms. Again, old blackboards with holes in them serve as partitions between the individual classes. Not glass windows, but wired metal, lets air and light and outside sounds into the buildings. A sink, with the only running water in the school, is in the Head Teacher's office. An outhouse stands nearby.

Average attendance at the Biabou School is 872, but on banana days many parents keep their children out of school to help them in the fields or care for younger brothers and sisters at home, so fewer students are present.

The government has recently instituted a plan of age-grading which makes it mandatory for teachers to progress some students to the next grade even if they fail. Students generally cannot stay at the same level longer than two years. Streaming, or division of the levels by ability in Sections A, B and C -- from the brightest to the most dull children -- attempts to facilitate the teaching of children having unequal abilities.
Each level from Junior I through Senior III has a daily schedule, which is the same for all schools, prepared by the Ministry of Education. The curriculum, in general, includes: mathematics, social studies, language arts, science, art, music, physical education, and religious knowledge. Lessons for the latter four subjects do not occur daily. The day is divided into eight periods and every teacher prepares a diary of lesson plans for the week which the Head Teacher must approve.

Of the 31 teachers at the school, the two "Qualified Assistant Teachers" are females, graduated from the St. Vincent Teachers College; and another woman is also an Assistant Teacher. The rest of the teachers fall into two basic categories (very much simplified): 1) those who began teaching just after finishing elementary school and who now attend the Teacher Training Center one or two days per week and help as Pupil Teachers the rest of the week (nine females and three males); and 2) Student Teachers who either a) have taught for a long period of time, although not after finishing secondary school or the Teacher Training Center, and b) those who have attended secondary school and now teach (altogether ten females and nine males). Many of them are now working toward passing the required examinations for the General Certificate of Education in order to attend the Teachers College.

The dusty schoolyard separating the Junior and Senior school buildings remains quite still until approximately 8:00 in the morning when a few children begin to arrive. By 8:30 the area resounds with shouts and laughter and crying, too. As the children play, talk and quarrel, the teachers reach the school and they sign the time by their names in the ledger that rests upon the Head Teacher's desk. By 8:45 all the teachers should have arrived and many congregate in the little room collecting supplies and exchanging good-mornings, the news, or gossip.

At 8:45 a teacher takes the hand-bell and gives it a good shake for a first warning to the hundreds of children who have gathered on the premises. The second bell rings at 8:55 and teachers admonish the children to line up in orderly fashion in front of the classrooms. Then as the 9:00 o'clock bell is heard, the teachers lead all the students into the large room for general morning prayers. At each tinkle of the bell, the children know automatically which prayer to repeat -- eyes closed, hands together -- and when to be silent in order to hear the Bible reading. Finally after a ring, all the students respectfully say "Good morning, teacher"; then, on signal, they file to their respective classrooms singing the designated morning song. The day's work commences.

Outside the building, a male teacher supervises the cleaning of the yard and gutters, which are by the walk, and the burning of refuse. Inside, the school seems much smaller as the children, boys and girls together, sit four or five on benches made for two or three. About a third of the students wear the uniform -- navy blue and white-checked blouse and navy blue jumper for girls and khaki shirt and shorts for boys. Many do not wear shoes. While the children talk and amuse
themselves, the teachers spread out the large (12" x 16" or so) attendance book on the wooden desks provided for them and proceed to check those pupils who are present. All but four teachers come from Biabou and the surrounding districts, so soon after the beginning of the term they know the children. Beside each child's name is his age in years and months, his registration number, and his religion.

On the step to the lower school, the Head Teacher discusses a problem with the woman who takes care of locking up the school after the Methodist Church uses it on Sundays. Either she or the teacher responsible for opening and closing the school has caused the loss of a lock and one of them must replace it.

In the lower school the infants (aged five to six years) are learning to print their names. The teacher helps individuals while the other 35-40 children gather around the large wooden table and try their best. The majority of parents have provided these little ones with blue lesson books and pencils -- the basic tools of the school child. In general, they use few other materials such as crayons, colored paper, maps, toys or amusements, because neither the government nor parents can afford to supply them.

Another class prepares for a lesson in Language Arts - Penmanship. The teacher meticulously draws lines on the board and writes a Bible verse for the children to copy. At the same time that one teacher writes on the blackboard, another collects pencils that need sharpening and then searches for a razor blade with which to do it -- frequently pausing to chat with fellow teachers. While the children wait, they make jokes, nudge each other, pinch, shove, etc. It is easy for them to occupy themselves constantly with small group activity since they are so close physically. In another classroom 60 children wait while their teacher checks her diary for the day's lesson plan. When the teacher finally begins her lesson, she finds it difficult to capture the children's attention and angrily commands two or three to stand in the back of the room -- a common punishment.

Outside, other classes may be in session, too. Sometimes benches and blackboards are carried out, but more often the children stand. Language Arts - Reading lessons proceed as teachers read and students repeat in unison. Or Language Arts - Poetry lessons are learned in the same manner by oral repetition and memorization of a poem. Teachers lead the classes outside for two main reasons: 1) It is often cooler outside than in the stifling classroom, and 2) It helps cut down the noise level inside the school.

Another scene takes place outside, also, as the Head Teacher lines up offenders for a strapping. Although many children arrive at school late, perhaps because of walking distances of three miles, or having to help with household chores in the morning, these idle are punished because they went to the beach instead of reporting to class punctually. The school is responsible for the children during school hours. The Head Teacher, a female, searches out a male teacher to administer the belt lashes. While he performs this duty, his class is left unattended.
At almost 10:30, a few teachers stand to the side of their classes chatting together and wait for the 10:30 ten-minute break. When it arrives the schoolyard turns into noisy bedlam. A few children may join one or two teachers in the short walk to the shop where they may buy a cooling drink or ice-cream. When available, the Head Teacher and helpers apportion the government-provided yeast biscuits to the infants and younger children.

When classes resume, the noise level seems to diminish little, not only because of teachers shouting over less than quiet children, but also as a result of extra sounds resounding from the outside. In the schoolyard teachers lead the children in games for a period of physical education. And in a corner a music lesson is taught. An eager teacher found a music book among dozens of other unused books in the office cupboard. Everyone sings "My Old Kentucky Home" and "Oh Susannah" a little off-pitch, but spiritedly, nonetheless. Another source of commotion and noise arises from the Junior V class as the children pass around material recently received from a sister school in Ontario. Exclamations abound over the wonders of hockey and ice and deer and elk in snow-covered forests, and foreign stamps, and a school newspaper printed on colored paper.

Soon the morning ends. At about 12:00 children say a prayer of grace and are then dismissed to go home for the one-hour lunch break. Few children return back to school early in the afternoon, for most have a great distance to walk.

At approximately 1:00 another gathering of teachers forms at the office, and they talk while signing the ledger. The hand-bell is rung again, and classes resume.

This afternoon the Head Teacher holds one of many special tutorial classes outside for the scholars who are preparing to take scholarship exams for entrance into the secondary schools. As they review answers to the lesson, each pupil properly standing -- as always before speaking -- an interruption occurs. An irate parent wants to confer with the Head Teacher about a strapping his son received the day before. It is the government policy to try and eliminate this form of punishment as much as possible, and Head Teachers are the only teachers delegated authority to administer the strap. Often, however, other teachers use it too, and the result of one such occurrence and the child's ensuing story has brought this parent to complain.

In the upper school children find it more difficult than usual to devote their full attention to the teachers. Although it is situated on a higher level than the other building and is therefore a little cooler as a result of more breeze, the people still become quite hot and sticky with the heat of many bodies added to high noon temperatures. In a religious knowledge class, a hopeful future preacher expounds upon a Bible lesson. In another class a teacher conducts a Social Studies - History lesson, and the chapter in the West Indian history book on two famous Negroes concerns George Washington Carver and Booker T. Washington. Not
all the children possess books, and many of them do not bother to look on with someone else. Another teacher discusses electricity in a science class. The school has no electricity and only a few children have it in their homes. The teacher utilizes the blackboard frequently, and some students in the back cannot see everything he writes. But it hardly matters, because many of them are occupied elsewhere with friends or dreams, rather than with taking notes in blue lesson books.

At a corner table a Pupil Teacher grades the Language arts - Composition assignments of writing business letters. He marks in the majority of blue books "poor" and on a few writes "tried" in commendation of the effort, rather than the success, of the student. After he returns the books, another teacher reviews common errors with the class and in answer to questions whether everyone understands his comments, all reply in unison, "Yes, teacher."

The Senior III class reviews material in preparation for the School Leaving Examination, which is taken at the end of the third term each year and at the end of the school career for most of the students. Perhaps one-fifth to one-fourth of the students will pass the exam and receive certificates.

As 3:00 approaches the minutes get longer until a teacher rings the bell. After children recite prayers once again and then quietly sit at their seats, the teachers dismiss them. Often, two or three classes must stay for detention as a result of misbehavior and inattention during school. Once the school day ends, a sense of camaraderie between the young teachers and older students is displayed as they may join each other in banter or games.

Since the end of the term nears, the Head Teacher has called a staff meeting (they are held only rarely), and the teachers are collected -- some just finding out about it minutes beforehand. Tutoring lessons, frequently given by teachers after school, are cancelled. When the teachers have gathered together, the Head Teacher first reminds them that much work remains to be accomplished before the August vacation begins, and she chastizes teachers who arrive tardy, loaf, and spend too much time visiting together. Specifically, she asks that guitars not be brought to school and played, unless for lesson purposes.

Then the subject of exams, which the teachers must submit to the Head Teacher for approval, arouses discussion of grading procedures and the particular percentage required for students to pass. Usually at least 50% of the children in each class fail, but if they have reached a certain age, they will be promoted anyway. Clarification of this policy is made during the meeting.

Next, a short discussion follows. It concerns a proposed picnic for the teachers on August Monday, a holiday, but no one wants to take responsibility of organization.
The last matter to be decided -- which teachers will attend the two-week summer school mathematics course, offered by the Extra-Mural Department of the University of the West Indies -- commences with spirited debate because few teachers want to participate. Many already have plans for the holidays, or do not have transportation to Kings­town, or cannot afford to spend the extra money for transportation and lunch meals. Finally, some peers nominate fellow teachers and vote to send them, whether or not the specific nominee desires the opportunity.

Then the meeting ends, and teachers leave for home at about 5:00 o'clock. And another school day closes.

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Few schools existed in the West Indies before the emancipation of slaves in 1834. The majority of plantation owners and European officials sent their children to the homeland for their education. As for the education of the slave:

The planters do too much or too little in this matter. If they will educate the slave, then they do too little for their own safety in persisting to debar him from those privileges to which he will soon feel that he has acquired an equitable right. . . . It will be impossible to march the Negroes on the road to knowledge and compel them to stand at ease within the old intrenchments of ignorance (Coleridge, 1826: 321).

When the slaves were granted freedom, three fundamental reasons spurred the colonialists to establish a few schools: 1) the necessity of the colonial administration to bring order into anomie; 2) proselytizing of missionaries and priests; and 3) British, in the case of the British West Indies, humanitarianism and doctrine of trusteeship by some administrators (Oxaal, 1968).

At first, the religious denominations attended to the educational needs of the people, and the majority of schools established were Methodist; then came the Anglican and the Roman Catholic schools. The English government did, however, contribute aid to the churches in their endeavors. In 1834, the government made its first grant of £80 for education in St. Vincent. The purposes of education as stated in a circular Dispatch from the colonial office, dated January 28, 1847, follow:

a) Religious Education -- to inculcate the principles and promote the influence of Christianity; b) the English Language -- to diffuse a grammatical knowledge of the English language as the most important agent of civilization for the colored population of the colonies; c) Requirements of Small Farmers -- to communicate such a knowledge of writing and arithmetic . . . as may enable the peasant to economise his means, and give the small farmer the power to enter into calculations and agreements. . . ; d) Relationships with Authority -- the lesson books of the colonial
schools should also teach the mutual interests of the mother-country and her dependencies (sic); the rational basis for their connection, and the domestic and social duties of the colored races (Coleridge, 1826: 58).

When 27 schools, probably functioning as adjuncts to the church, were established on St. Vincent in 1849, the government grant-in-aid was £815. The practice of government subsidization of church schools continues to the present. Today, 38 out of the 61 elementary schools on St. Vincent are classified as government schools. The differentiation between denominational schools and government schools may be misleading, however, because the government provides a common curriculum, builds and furnishes the schools, and pays salaries of teachers. Church-affiliated schools pay one-third the cost of the building and two-thirds the cost of repairs. The parish-priest or minister acts as Manager of the school and is consulted by the Ministry of Education in the selection and dismissal of the teachers. The Manager especially considers the teachers' moral characters. According to one Manager, in his role of moral inspector of the school, he tries to insure that the teachers' conduct and attitudes represent standards upon which children can model themselves. It is hoped, too, that the Manager aids in the religious education of the children, which composes part of the general curriculum of all schools. The Vincentian government does not yet feel strong enough financially or otherwise to fully take over responsibility of the formal educational system. Unlike Trinidad and Tobago, conflict between the churches and state over the schools has not risen to a high level of friction in St. Vincent, although some disagreements do occur, mostly over employee decisions. It remains to be seen whether this will become an issue in the future as the government grows stronger. This is unlikely, however, because in current practice, the government has almost complete control over the schools.

Although historical antecedents in the form of church control over the educational system have not affected St. Vincent negatively as in Trinidad and Tobago, St. Vincent does share some historical repercussions with other West Indian islands. Hundreds of years of colonial slave rule has had countless ramifications in the West Indian culture. Specifically, as related to schools, an institution of formal education never had an opportunity to develop and evolve in the West Indies because outsiders planted and imposed one on the people. Horwitz reacts to the effects on the West Indians of an implanted educational system in his study on Morne-Paysan in Martinique:

Educationally, colonialism has meant the imposition of metropolitan curricula, texts, and examinations in local schools. Children learn the history and geography of the metropole, and are ignorant of their own. "One hundred years before Christ, the Germans came to our land..." begins a textbook used in the Dutch Windwards in 1958 (Keur and Keur, 1960: 193). British West Indian pupils have to learn arithmetic problems in terms of pounds, shillings and pence, even though the local units of currency are dollars and cents. Martiniquan students are
taught that in the winter the snow accumulates on the fallen leaves, while they are expected to know nothing of the geography of Guadeloupe. West Indian nationalism as it emerged following the Second World War differed from the early nationalisms of Ireland, India, and the Arab lands, for example, and the contemporary nationalisms of Africa and other parts of Asia, in its general avoidance of nativism and the evocation of its own past. The metropolitan colonial remains the model of intellectual excellence in the Caribbean (Horowitz, 1967:4).

Colonial domination continues to hang over the West Indies, especially in the field of education. Standards of excellence at advanced levels are measured by the General Certificate of Education Examinations which the British prepare for the Commonwealth -- except for the West Indian History exam which is prepared by the University of the West Indies. Too often the exams themselves contain material unfamiliar to the West Indians, and omit that which would be more relevant to the people's experiences and environment. A cultural bias exists, too, in the grading of the examinations by Britishers who determine excellence by their standards. Another major problem of this system, according to Vincentian authorities, concerns standardized English versus Vincentian English. The English G. C. E. is the most difficult for Vincentian students to pass and the Teachers College and other institutions of higher learning require the English certificate for entrance. Yet one term some students without the English G. C. E. were admitted to the St. Vincent Teachers College for a trial experiment and their work measured up in all respects to that of other students. The problem remains, however, of using British-composed G. C. E.'s as a measure of West Indian ability, and in its entirety the problem becomes magnified since all schooling beginning with the elementary schools must be geared toward colonial standards in order to provide higher education for the people. At the present, serious plans are being studied to establish a Caribbean Examinations Council in place of the G. C. E., and a committee set up by the U. W. I. is researching professional aspects of such a council. A draft constitution has already been prepared but not fully accepted by all governments. The operation of a Caribbean system could truly change certain aspects and emphases of the Vincentian educational system.

Change, however, does not occur overnight, and a long tradition of looking to the colonial powers for guidelines will not cease in the near future. As one educated Vincentian expresses the situation: "People think that what is imported is good."

West Indian consciousness, though, increases with each new generation. The Vincentian Ministry of Education is attempting to change its curriculum to provide better for its people and to create a pride in the state. Schools use more and more books by West Indian authors which have
increased meaningfulness to students, such as the Nelson's West Indian Reader. Many adults and older teachers see this change as coming too rapidly and they prefer the old standard Royal Reader. But most teachers and the youth look for more rapid innovations in this direction.

A basic reason for changes in the Vincentian educational system stems from the government's recognition that the educational goals of today necessarily differ from the original ones established by the colonials. The purpose of schooling as stated by officials in the Ministry of Education includes the following basic goals: 1) to provide a basic literacy for all the people; 2) to improve skills, therefore increasing opportunity for jobs; and 3) to give children a broad education so they will be able to adjust themselves to the societal and world changes they will encounter in the future, and to provide them with a background as future Vincentian citizens to make responsible choices in their lives.

At present, officials recognize that the elementary education received by Vincentian children does not fully serve the above purposes. The Ministry of Education intends to rectify the situation by improving the schools in two basic directions: 1) environmental reorganization, and 2) curriculum change. One environmental change which has already been introduced into the schools concerns the arrangement of grades and classes. Formerly, children stayed in the same class until they passed, which meant that age disparity was great due to the common phenomenon that more than half the class flunks exams each term. This posed a great problem when children reached the proper age for taking secondary school entrance exams because too often they were not at the correct grade level scholastically to be able to pass the exam. Now, after children become a certain age, they must be promoted to the next grade even if they do not pass the exam. The new system, though, adds pressure to the untrained teachers who frequently must teach students of widely differing ability. They remain unhappy about the situation.

The attempted reduction of strapping represents another "environmental" change. According to the Ministry, only Head Teachers are given the authority to strap, and then the punishment should only be employed as a last resort. Soon another improvement in the educational environment will be effected if a much thought-about reorganization of the now-complex teacher structure and pay scales occurs.

The Ministry of Education is also involved in improving the environment outside of the school, specifically in the area of economic opportunity. The government realizes that not enough emphasis is placed on the achievement of an elementary school graduate who holds a certificate, and officials encourage more businesses to give recognition to this accomplishment. The School Leaving Certificate is already recognized as a qualification for entrance into teaching, nursing, the police force and some private industries.

The government also feels that many people want their children to go beyond primary school, even those pupils not particularly scholastically inclined. Junior secondary schools, a replacement for Senior
Sections I, II, and III, are presently being slowly established, hopefully to increase the educational standards of the people by offering not only the normal academic curriculum but also general subjects with a more practical nature: agriculture, handicrafts, woodworking, carpentry, domestic economics. The government aims to extend school places using junior secondary schools as much as possible, and a very future goal is the provision of free secondary education for all.

These changes incorporate the Ministry's goal to make school more relevant to the needs of the people. A major thrust in this direction has been developed by the Ministry of Education largely through curriculum change. New classroom syllabuses, the Bibles of the elementary school, are being written for each subject area through the combined efforts of experts in the Ministry and Teachers College. These syllabuses stress two significant changes: 1) integration of subject matter (e.g., integration in the junior sections of civics, history, and geography into general social studies), and 2) the development of West Indian pride. One of the easiest means to show the government's point of view toward education, its goals, and its desires to improve the child's learning experience is to quote from the newly published Social Studies Syllabus:

The ultimate objective of the course in Social Studies in the Senior School is to educate for good citizenship and in particular to train our young people so that they will be both willing and able to effect an improvement in the social environment of our island ... the knowledge acquired and attitudes, habits and skills developed and displayed in the classroom will be a fair indication of the quality of their future contribution to society, particularly in St. Vincent.

Social Studies should stress objectives and planning. The pupils should have a definite part in the decisions concerning these objectives and in this planning the project method can be effectively used in this subject, but no attempt need be made to use it to the exclusion of other satisfactory methods of instruction. It would be futile to attempt to teach Social Studies without having it grow out of the previous knowledge and development of pupils, their present needs and the realisation of their future needs.

A note about civics (third year course): All education in a democratic society will be of little value unless our heritage is understood and our responsibilities as citizens are accepted. As it is impossible to appreciate what is not understood, a conscious effort must be made to teach civics, to impart information concerning the evolution of government the organisation and functioning of our present forms of government and the role of the citizen in the maintenance and development of our democratic constitutions.

It is realized that a knowledge of civics does not necessarily produce good citizenship, but the understanding of the privileges Rights and Responsibility [sic] of a good citizen will do much to create good citizenship.
While formal instruction in civics may be confined to the third year, the teaching of citizenship must pervade the whole school programme and should be correlated with other areas of the curriculum. Opportunities must be provided to see civics in action and to participate in democratic situations in the classroom.

Objectives: Knowledge and Understanding. To master and to retain the essential facts necessary for growth and development in understanding, attitudes and ability. To develop some understandings of living in the community and of life in other times and other places. To develop knowledge of how social organisation has been influenced by geography and history.

Attitudes. To help pupils to develop a sense of responsibility to the community and to use this in making some positive contribution to the life and work of the community. To develop positive attitudes towards all people in our country, and also towards people in other lands.

Skills. To develop skill in solving human problems by use of the scientific method -- identifying problems, finding facts and feelings, setting up possible solutions, trying out various suggestions, choosing the most likely; evaluating results, recognising new problems. To develop skill in the use of research methods (Ministry of Education 1970: 12-13).

Both the officers in the Ministry of Education and the teachers who teach at the Teachers College realize that the curriculum and syllabus project the ideal for education, not the reality. The experts lament the conditions which perpetuate the old and prevent innovations: lack of enough trained teachers; lack of school equipment, space, and facilities; lack of community educational facilities, i.e., educational radio, bookstores, libraries, enough movies, etc.; and lack of time for the officials to help promote and implement the new syllabuses by visiting the schools, giving aid and demonstration lessons, and guiding follow-up. And most of all, lack of money to provide for the educational system -- money to help ameliorate the above problems and conditions.

Vincentians as a whole respect and value education, and approximately 15% of the government budget goes to schools (the majority spent on the secondary schools rather than elementary). Many people in Biafara commend the government for promoting the educational welfare of the state, and they cite the following reasons for believing improvement has occurred: 1) more qualified teachers and better teacher training, 2) more secondary school places (and the people see more children in the community attaining them), 3) more scholarships, and 4) more schools. Biafara community leaders lobbied for the new junior secondary school to be constructed in the community. It was recently completed and was scheduled to open in the fall of 1971, and this physical reminder of the government's progress in education increases its favorable image.
The people's image of schools in general and their attitudes toward the education their children receive vary, however. On the one hand they see the advancements mentioned above, and on the other hand they realize that not enough improvement has occurred: still, there are not enough trained teachers, school places, or facilities. A basic complaint about school and education revolves around the question of discipline. Some members of the community adamantly say that children do not learn as much nowadays, and a few recommend more strapping to improve the situation. Oftentimes, though, parent reaction to strapping of his/her child is negative -- and according to the acting Head Teacher of the Biabou school, the majority of communication between teachers and parents concerns disagreements over the children's behavior and teacher use of the strap. This conflict involves a much larger problem that centers around a lack of respect, which seems (as compared to a few years ago) to be a social phenomenon of the present. In brief explanation, the phenomenon works in two basic directions: 1) lack of respect of young people for adults and teachers, and old standards, and 2) lack of respect of adults for the "youth" (under 30) many of whom are teachers, so that children do not necessarily learn at home to respect their teachers. Adults often complain that the teachers do not conduct themselves properly; for example, they use "bad" language, or loaf on street corners. In small communities, actions such as these will be observed by pupils and the parents feel this is why children do not respect their teachers.

Parents and the community expect quite a lot from teachers: to be respectable, responsible citizens, to help in community affairs, and to educate the children. Increasingly, the teacher's leadership is not needed because the community has become more informed and educated as a result of radio, travel, and government information services. His/her actual prestige and appreciation may have been lowered somewhat in recent years, but community expectations still remain high.

Teachers, on the other hand, expect the same qualities in parents and usually express disappointment in the lack of co-operation of the parents and community in aiding their children's education. At least 50% of the teachers at the Biabou school discuss problems, most often concerning discipline, with parents of their students. Sometimes a request is made for the parents to supply the child with necessary school books. A few teachers make a special effort to contact parents. In general, however, many teachers feel that parent response is poor, and also that the response of children to school and teachers is often less than respectful. Many attribute the cause to unfavorable economic and social conditions, the most often cited by teachers attending the Teachers College being: 1) physical and psychological results of poverty of the people, 2) lack of education among many parents, 3) unstable families, which result in insecure children, and 4) a national feeling of complacency.

Many teachers become discouraged in the present situation for other reasons, too. They comment upon the difficulty of holding the pupils' interest with the same routine, and many also wish for more materials and equipment so that they could do more in the classroom than preach.
Goals of education among teachers vary. A few say the purpose of education is mainly to teach the children the Three R's and to prepare them for jobs. Others state that people attend school purely to attain more knowledge. Most believe that: practical courses in home economics and agriculture should be increased; children should be aided in personality development; character traits such as co-operation should be encouraged; patriotism should be stressed and children should be trained to become responsible citizens. These goals are somewhat idealistic in the face of the many obstacles facing the Vincentian formal educational system.

Teachers themselves pose a severe problem because many view their career as merely a stepping-stone to a future, and as soon as another opportunity presents itself they willingly give up what they feel is an unappreciated, discouraging job. Another problem schools face concerns tardiness and irregular attendance of pupils. In Biabou this problem is less severe than in many communities because many adults, if not fairly educated themselves, seem to be aware of the importance of education. These people are looked up to by other members of the village and they exert noticeable influence. The former Head Teacher of the Biabou Methodist School, still titled in respect, "Teacher Ballah," holds the only paid office on the Village Council. Attitudes toward the under-educated could be expressed by a comment one villager made when referring to another: "Excuse Mrs. X -- she can't read or write." In general, all the people desire literacy for their children.

A social pressure exists, too, in Biabou to send children to school. Fewer absences occur in the school among children from Biabou than from the surrounding districts because people will talk among themselves and to the parents if a child does not attend regularly. A prestige factor also influences the people's esteem of education, and one person actually stated somewhat sarcastically that the only reason so-and-so sends his child to secondary school is "to keep up" with so-and-so.

Several people say that Biabou is more progressive educationally than many villages in St. Vincent, and teachers who have taught elsewhere agree, stating that here, more parents provide the pupils with books and supplies. Some parents also pay for teachers to tutor their children.

A few Vincentians state that many people send children to school in order to be rid of them for the day because they cause a nuisance at home. And indeed, a few parents wonder about the real advantages of education for their children. To a great extent, the uneducated are the ones who doubt the usefulness of school, whereas the educated encourage and help their children. Most of the uneducated parents will encourage their children and even withstand hardships to send them to secondary school if they show exceptional promise and aptitude; but given the basically barren background of these children at home, the ones who do well are special cases. In general, the inadequate facilities of the school increase the chances of a potentially bright pupil to be undernourished educationally and unnoticed. The children of the educated are apt to perform the best at school. Scholarships to secondary school are awarded on the basis of academic excellence rather than ability to pay. As a
result, the educated families, who are the most likely to be relatively financially capable, receive aid to further their children’s education more often than the poor. So the comparatively poor and uneducated families have less chance to further a child’s education as a result of both their social background and economic status. Therefore, the system decreases the participation-orientation toward school of the poor and under-educated. It also perpetuates class stratification.

In any case, whether or not they actively encourage their child’s progress, most of the people in Biabou do stress the importance of education for children, either because they believe it or because it represents the accepted community opinion. The most often verbalized reason for the significance of school stems from social and economic aspirations of the people. Most parents would like to see their children in a white-collar job. As stated before, government officials realize that the educational, economic, and occupational facilities of the state will not adequately take care of all the people, and they are attempting to expand them. As previously explained, educational facilities increase constantly and the government hopes in the future to make elementary education compulsory and to provide free secondary schooling for all. A new Technical College which should be training 200 full-time and 100 part-time students within three years, and a new Teachers College opened in 1971. A basic problem remains, however, as the youth population (approximately 50% of the total Vincentian population) reaches employment age and status, as even jobs for the trained will soon become highly competitive as more and more people receive more education. The situation could become grave, especially since aspirations remain high among the children. Many of elementary-school age express desires to become professionals and in all probability, as they settle for less, their life goal or “potential alternative” will rarely be realized. One psychological result of this situation may be expressed through a state of anomie, and its evidences can presently be found in some Vincentian males aged 15-25 who do not have steady jobs. An important aspect of their unemployment relates to the negative social attitude towards agriculture, and the laborer’s lot. Fewer people aspire to work on the land, yet St. Vincent remains, as a result of physical environment, a basically agriculturally oriented state.

Disdain for the land has traditionally been perpetuated in the schools as a result of Western orientation, but the schools are gradually changing to stress the West Indian viewpoint. This viewpoint is well-expressed by a Vincentian teacher in his thesis “The Educational Needs of St. Vincent as an Emerging Nation”:

... sometimes education lacks the meaning that it should have for the times in which we live. Our country should therefore have a variety of educational facilities and the variety of teaching methods if we Vincentians are to enjoy the same status as the other emerging nations of the world. ... We are deeply anxious to see our system of education improved. Success will depend on the ability of our children to grapple with the problems of this new world, their capacity to take advantage of its opportunities rather than to be buffeted by them (George, n.d.: vi, vii).
Of all the peoples' goals and aspirations concerning the Vincentian educational system, the only one that can presently be expected is the achievement of literacy for the people. Yet this in itself is an accomplishment for an emerging state. And with the perceptive and dedicated efforts of the Vincentians, and continual, albeit slow, change not only in the educational sphere, but also and importantly in the social and economic spheres, perhaps more of the goals may be realized in the future.